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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001591

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM KCOR CG ELECTIONS
SUBJECT: EASTERN KASAI GOVERNOR REJECTS ASSEMBLY SEAT:
REASONS AND RAMIFICATIONS

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Dominique Kanku, the governor of Eastern Kasai province, has declined to take his seat in the DRC's new National Assembly, opting instead to remain in his current position. Kanku is the first high-level GDRC official elected to parliament on July 30 to make it known he intends to stay in his current office and not join the legislature. Kanku said he made his decision to stay in Eastern Kasai in order to finish the work he started there, as well as to prepare for a possible run for governor later this year. Kanku's decision may also have been influenced by allegations of corruption being made against him by local officials. End summary.

KANKU OPTS OUT OF ASSEMBLY TO FINISH WHAT HE STARTED

¶2. (U) Dominique Kanku, a member of Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) party, announced October 11 that he would not claim his seat in the newly-elected National Assembly in Kinshasa, but would instead remain in place as the governor of Eastern Kasai province. Kanku is the first high-level GDRC official elected to the new legislature to make known he will opt out of his mandate in the Assembly. His place will now be filled by his designated replacement (also from the MLC), whom he named when declaring his candidacy.

¶3. (U) Kanku -- at age 43 the youngest serving governor in the DRC -- is a popular figure in Eastern Kasai, particularly in the provincial capital of Mbuji-Mayi. In the July 30 legislative elections, while Kanku won just 16 percent of the overall vote in his district, he outpolled his nearest competitor (in a field of 351 candidates) by a margin of six-to-one, receiving more votes himself than any of the other 69 political parties and independent candidates running. Because of his strong showing, Kanku was able on his votes alone to secure three of Mbuji-Mayi's eleven National Assembly seats for the MLC, based on the DRC's proportional voting system.

¶4. (SBU) Kanku told us he ran for the National Assembly out of a "sense of duty" to his political party and for the opportunity given him by the MLC to serve as governor. He explained, however, that he has maintained from the beginning of his campaign that if elected he would cede his position in Kinshasa to stay in Eastern Kasai. Kanku said his focus now is to finish the work he started in the province, but he may consider other opportunities in the future. Kanku's political adviser David Kalonji said the governor is very interested in running again for his current position when elections are

held at the very end of this year. Kalonji added that Kanku's popularity -- and his remaining in the province -- will help the MLC's electoral chances in the October 29 presidential runoff and provincial assembly elections. (Note: The provincial assemblies, once seated, will in turn elected provincial governors. It is therefore in Kanku's interest to ensure that the MLC controls the Eastern Kasai provincial assembly if he wants to be elected. End note.)

BUT ARE THERE OTHER REASONS TO STAY PUT?

15. (C) Kanku's decision, though, may not have been taken entirely due to his declared desire to serve Eastern Kasai. During a recent trip to Eastern Kasai, EconCouns and PolOff received reports from several sources that Kanku has been involved in a variety of questionable financial dealings, including the skimming of diamond profits and the misappropriation of government resources. Kanku's alleged involvement in these affairs has even had an impact on the executive management of the province, as Kanku himself has reportedly attempted to prevent one of his vice governors from serving as the interim governor during his absence during the campaign.

16. (C) MONUC-Mbuji-Mayi Head of Office Mamady Kouyate said when Kanku left his office to run his campaign, he tried unsuccessfully to have Vice Governor for Economic Affairs Brigitte Oyumba take over his position, instead of the province's Vice Governor for Political and Administrative Affairs, Patrick Baluba, who is next in the line of succession. Baluba (a member of the RCD party), however, has

KINSHASA 00001591 002 OF 002

been an outspoken critic of Kanku's, while Oyumba (from the FONUS political party) has been a closer ally. Kouyate said Kanku's political maneuverings to favor Oyumba over Baluba have created "bad blood" in the provincial executive. Baluba was even recently forced to have police arrest an MLC member of the provincial executive bureau (who is also the party's provincial president) after he refused to stop forcibly disrupting a cabinet meeting Baluba had been chairing.

17. (C) Others in Mbuji-Mayi said Kanku's political favoritism goes beyond attempts to silence his critics. Civil society activist Christian Mpunga said Kanku and Oyumba have conspired to expropriate government property, evict legal tenants from their buildings, and then sell the buildings well below market value. Mpunga cited the example of how Kanku had the provincial health director forcibly evicted from a government-owned house (where he ran his office) after declaring the building "abandoned." The house was then reportedly sold to Oyumba for 800 USD, even though the property's value was more than 10,000 USD. Mpunga said the building was returned to the state once details of the sale became public. He added that several other supposedly "abandoned" buildings in the area have been seized and sold in the same way, all to friends and partners of Kanku and Oyumba, including outgoing Minister of Budget (and MLC chairman) Francois Muamba. The deal with Muamba was also overturned when it came to light.

SKIMMING THE PROFITS?

18. (C) The director of the DRC's national intelligence agency (ANR) in Eastern Kasai, Roger Kibeliso, also accused Kanku of corruption. The ANR chief said Kanku has also been involved in other financial misdeeds, including the appropriation of diamond profits earmarked for the province. Kibeliso said Kanku had placed his own agent, Jean-Pierre Kadima, in Kinshasa in 2005 personally to ensure that retrocessions generated by diamond and other exports were returned to the province. He claimed that money was diverted from provincial

coffers to a war chest to be shared with other MLC candidates. He estimated the total amount of money embezzled could add up to millions of dollars. Kibeliso did not provide any hard evidence of these allegations, either. (Note: The ANR is closely allied with President Kabila and thus his political party. Any charges made against Kanku and the MLC should thus be seen as being politically motivated. End note.)

¶9. (C) In a separate meeting, Baluba did not make any reference to Kanku's alleged misdeeds, even when asked about retrocessions by EconCouns. He did bemoan the terrible state of financial affairs in the province, primarily blaming the much-reduced production of MIBA (the DRC's diamond parastatal) and its resulting inability to turn a profit. Mpunga and Kouyate both said, however, that Baluba had planned to make public the allegations against Kanku before he launched his own campaign for the provincial assembly. Baluba has not yet made such an announcement. (Note: As reported, Baluba is a member of a rival political party, and his intentions should be considered in this light. End note.)

COMMENT: THE DECISION HAS AN IMPACT

¶10. (C) Comment: Kanku's decision to stay in Eastern Kasai appears to be in his own personal and political interest, as well as in the interest of the MLC. Kanku's popularity -- coupled with his campaigning for MLC candidates at all levels -- will boost the electoral chances for his party in the province. With Kanku in place, Bemba could stand a better chance in Eastern Kasai. Almost certainly, Kanku will bolster the campaigns of the MLC's provincial assembly candidates, increasing his own chances of remaining governor of Eastern Kasai. End comment.

DOUGHERTY